

AUGUST 1946

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by Alexander Bender

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THEATRE WORLD



Alexander Bender

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August 1946

Over the Footlights

OUTSTANDING event of the month has been the opening of the new Cochran show at the Adelphi. Unhappily, on account of illness, Mr. Cochran was not able to be at the first night on July 17th. As we write "C.B." is in a nursing home and all hope he will have a speedy recovery. *Big Ben*, with its lovely Vivian Ellis music and witty A. P. Herbert book and lyrics, is a production of which "C.B." might well be proud. We shall review *Big Ben* next month.

Other recent productions not reviewed in this issue include *Dr. Faustus*, which opened at Stratford on July 12th; *Love Goes to Press*, Duchess, July 22nd; *Marriage à la Mode*, which will alternate with *The King-maker* at St. James's, July 24th; and *The Poltergeist*, Vaudeville, July 25th. *A Midsummer Night's Dream* was produced at the Open Air Theatre on July 16th, and Sean O'Casey's *The Star Turns Red*, having been granted a licence by the Lord Chamberlain for public performance, opened at the Unity on July 24th.

The Other Side, a new play by Ronald Millar, adapted from Storm Jameson's novel, will be presented by Jack de Leon at the Comedy Theatre on August 8th. The leading parts will be played by Gillian Lind, Louise Hampton, Valentine Dyall, Anthony Ireland and Elizabeth Sellars.

Clutterbuck, a triumphant success in the provinces, will be presented by Stephen Mitchell at Wyndhams on August 14th, with Constance Cummings, Patricia Burke, Naunton Wayne and Basil Radford in the leading parts. The author is Benn W. Levy, who also produces.

Mr. Mitchell's next production will be

J. B. Priestley's *Ever Since Paradise*, opening a ten-weeks tour at Sheffield on August 19th, with Roger Livesey, Ursula Jeans, Jane Carr, Dennis Arundell, Michael Dennisson and Joy Shelton in the leading roles. Mr. Priestley will produce his own play.

The Ballet Theatre of New York, who have had an enthusiastic reception at Covent Garden, have extended their season until August 17th.

Another piece of ballet news is that Jack Hylton is bringing Les Ballets des Champs Elysees back to London early in September with the same youthful leading dancers who captivated London on their previous visit.

Looking ahead to early autumn, it is interesting news that London is to have a permanent Ice Spectacle in one of her largest theatres, for which Tom Arnold has engaged a company of international stars with Cecilia Colledge as leading lady.

July 26th was the 90th birthday of Bernard Shaw, an event remembered and celebrated in many parts of the world. One might almost say that the sun never sets on a Shaw play, for certain it is that somewhere at all hours of the day one of his works is being enacted or read. "G.B.S." was never more popular than he is today, and it was a fitting tribute that the enterprising publishers of Penguin Books should mark the occasion by bringing out a special edition of his work. This edition, called "The Shaw Million," consists of 100,000 copies each of ten volumes, containing some sixteen plays, which are bound in Penguin style and published at the normal Penguin price of 1s. We doubt if there was ever better value for money.

F. S.

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New Shows of the Month

"Grand National Night"—*Apollo*, June 12th

"Crime and Punishment"—*New*, June 26th.

"Summer at Nohant"—*Lyric*, Hammer-smith, July 9th.

"Fortunato," "Cellar," "Brides at Sea"—*Granville*, June 28th, July 18th.

"Vicious Circle"—*Arts*, July 16th.

"Pick-Up Girl"—*New Lindsey*, transferred to *Prince of Wales*, July 23rd.

"Grand National Night"

THIS is a well-made and compact murder play of the type which does not call for serious criticism, but which will probably give excitement and pleasure to theatregoers for some time to come. In a well-written prologue distinguished by a remarkably true and unpleasant portrait of a drunkard by Hermione Baddeley, Gerald Coates (Leslie Banks) accidentally murders his dipsomaniac wife. The rest of the play is devoted to his battle of wits with the police in an effort to avoid detection and to gain a new chance of happiness with the woman he loves. The characters are little more than pawns in this mathematical problem, but the plot is ingeniously and neatly worked out and Hermione Baddeley as the wife and, later, her warm-hearted sister, Leslie Banks as the sympathetic murderer, Olga Edwardes and Charles Groves give excellent performances in a slick production.

A. W.

"Crime and Punishment"

THE difficulties of transposing a great novel to the stage have been brilliantly overcome in this adaptation by Rodney Ackland of Dostoevsky's famous book. By telescoping the scene of action so that Raskolnikoff lodges in the same house as the Marmeladoffs and both rooms are shown on the stage, a fine compactness is achieved and the interlacing destinies of the student who murders and cannot repent his crime, and the girl Sonia who prostitutes herself for her starving family yet never loses her purity, her compassion and her faith, are underlined.

In all such compression there must be loss. Katerina Marmeladoff and her family, filling the larger part of the stage with their suffering, brawling and squalor, inevitably loom larger in the action than the plot warrants, and the book's tense and dramatic concentration on the theme of Raskolnikoff's murder is a trifle vitiated. The play could, also, be cut with effect. Without the vital figure of Svidrigailov, Dounia's pursuer and haunter of Raskolnikoff, the mother and sister and her ludi-

crous fiancé tend to be irrelevant and Luzhin's accusation of Sonia seems unnecessarily dragged in. One gets, moreover, too little suggestion of Raskolnikoff's sense of nightmare and macabre terror, and the figure who accosts him with the cry of "Murderer!", and whom Raskolnikoff in the book half-imagines to be a figment of his feverish and guilt-ridden imagination, could not be more prosaically introduced and received. Nevertheless the play stands, both on its own account and as an interpretation of the novel. It is intensely moving; writing, production and Paul Sheriff's setting are rich in atmosphere, and with minor exceptions the acting is superb.

John Gielgud's Raskolnikoff has been highly praised. It is a magnificent study in nerves and loneliness of soul, and has moments of heart-wrenching pathos. Is it the complete Raskolnikoff of the book? Personally I do not believe this Raskolnikoff when he talks of the right to murder and wade through blood for an ideal: the defiant egocentric core is missing, and in the scenes with the detective, when one should sense two brilliant minds warily parrying and probing each other's thrust and defence, Raskolnikoff's mounting hysteria gives the game away too completely. Setting aside, however, the more complex psychology of the book, Gielgud's performance has a neurotic intensity and shows a sensitive insight into mental suffering. In force of emotion Audrey Fildes' performance of Sonia matches Gielgud's and in their great scene together surpasses it; this is acting of true feeling and great delicacy of touch. As Katerina, ineffectually trying to preserve gentility amid drunkenness, tuberculosis and squalor, Edith Evans plays with a virtuosity that avoids the eccentric; the character even in madness is real, and the death scene poignantly avoids fuss.

In a long cast one can only mention Peter Ustinov's detective (an astonishing characterisation even if this jumpy, nail-biting satyr is hardly the Parfiri Petrovitch of the book), Lilly Molnar's German lodging house keeper, Rosalind Atkinson's Old-Clothes Dealer and John Kidd's gentle Socialist. The play is presented by arrangement with Robert Helpmann, who commissioned the dramatisation and but for illness would have played the part of Raskolnikoff.

A. W.

"Summer at Nohant"

THE Company of Four's production, *Summer at Nohant*, by Jaroslav Iwaszkiewicz, translated from the Polish by Celina Wieniewska, falls into the category

of "Peeps into the Lives of the Great" and purports to depict the end of the intimacy between George Sand and Chopin. The play exaggerates the duration and importance of the Chopin episode in George Sand's life and alters the accepted manner of its termination. So much time is taken in summoning the members of Madame Dudevant's household from the past that the result is not more satisfactory as drama than as authentic biography but the final scene is very beautiful, and this is wrought purely by the playwright's imagination and the producer's sound theatre sense.

Lally Bowers gives an impressive performance in the part of George Sand as it is written, wearing masculine attire with dignity and grace and toying very thoughtfully with her cigar. She spoke with quiet precision and apparently limitless patience and understanding. It may be doubted whether George Sand, at the age of 36, had attained such purified, passionless calm. Chopin, long expected and heard playing the piano "off," does not appear until the end of the second act and prepares to depart at the beginning of Act III. Yet Donald Eccles has no difficulty in establishing the character. One believes that Chopin looked and spoke like that. This is a triumph, for it is rarely that we can be made to believe in the genius of the famous artists, writers and musicians that playwrights are prone to introduce to us. Laurence Payne vitalised and made interesting the part of Maurice, George Sand's predatory and self-indulgent son; and Rene Ray, playing the part of Solange, her tempestuously temperamental daughter, successfully overcame the handicap of rather stilted writing in the lines. Lawrence Hanray, in a part that could have been altered or omitted without affecting the play, enriched the performance considerably.

H. G. M.

Granville Theatre

THE work of the Quintero Brothers, in Mr. and Mrs. Granville-Barker's adaptations, has long been popular among the amateurs, but we do not often have an opportunity of seeing a professionally expert production. *Fortunato*, by reason of its theme, treatment and length, has no English equivalent. The attempts of a starving man to earn a little money to feed his starving family need a degree of objectivity foreign to native authors as a subject for pure entertainment. Andrew Cruickshank as the unfortunate Fortunato was rather at odds with the general presentation, formal, bare and rather archaic, but he won in the end. The final curtain, with its perilous switch-over from farce to exaltation, was quite successful.

Cellar, a new play by William Russell in the same bill, amounted to little more than its title implied. Three walls, a roof and

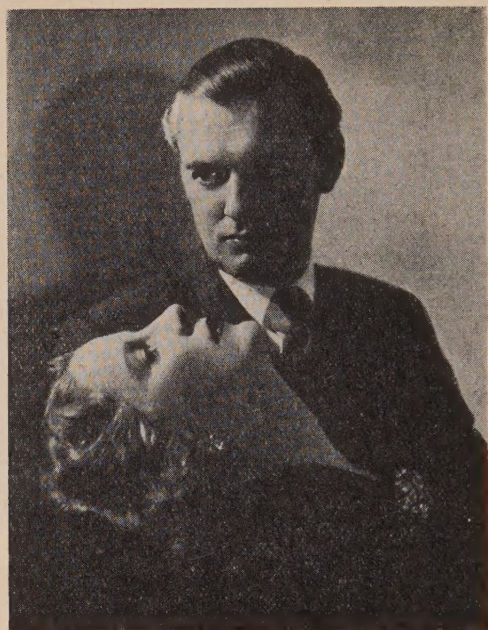


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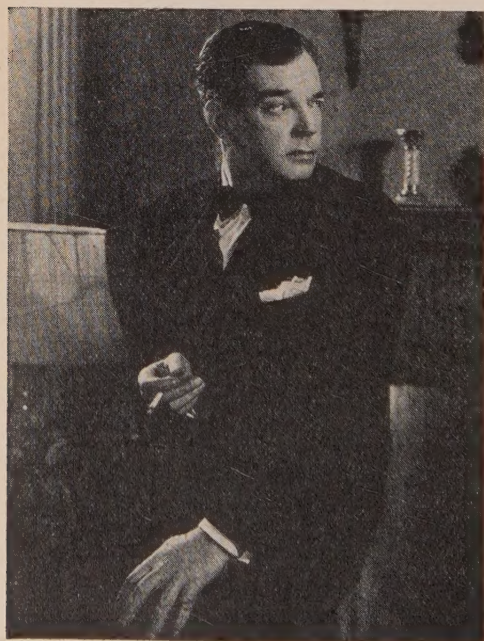
A new study by Dorothy Wilding of the brilliant author of *The Winslow Boy* at the Lyric, one of London's biggest recent successes.

a grating discount interest from the beginning and handicap the actors accordingly. Five men have taken refuge here after breaking prison and are waiting for an opportunity to get away. One of them, a negro mortally wounded by gunshot, rallies sufficiently in the first act to give a beautiful rendering of a Negro spiritual. Since this is the best thing in the play, one excuses the extremely inappropriate nature of the performance in the circumstances. Robert Adams has little else to do but lie and groan but that little he does so well that the scene had a focus during the first two acts. Patrick Crean gave a refreshingly vigorous presentation of the bully and natural boss of the gang but there was insufficient opposition to provide excitement. Gerald Kempinski contrived an interesting character study out of rather poor material.

Brides at Sea, a new play by Lionel Birch and Hans Rehfisch, is superficially concerned with eight or nine brides sailing to the New World, each with a story behind her and a problem ahead, but the main plot is a simple example of what might be called "getting off" at sea. John Allen and Mary Horn make the affair quite interesting and good entertainment. Joan White gives a lively performance as an uninhibited young female of considerable experience. Peggy Forbes-Robertson makes an agreeable impression as "a very forward March chick," avid for adventure and looking for a place in the Sun. One or two happy moments are afforded by the singing of



DIANA WYNYARD and HUGH WILLIAMS in a scene from *Portrait in Black*, the murder play at the Piccadilly Theatre (Picture by Dorothy Wilding)



LESLIE BANKS, who is appearing with Hermione Baddeley in *Grand National Night*, another murder play, at the Apollo (Picture by Alexander Bender)

Uriel Porter and Norman Williams gives valuable service towards maintaining a genial atmosphere. H. G. M.

"Vicious Circle"

THERE is nothing new about Jean-Paul Sartre's notion of hell, beyond the comforting implication that only quite extraordinary characters get there. In *Huis Clos*, translated by Marjorie Gabain and Joan Swinstead, and presented under the English title *Vicious Circle*, we are introduced to three assorted sensualists doomed to spend eternity in a private apartment of the Satanic Institute and act as torturers to each other. Since they would always act as torturers to somebody, this is a supreme example of economic planning. There are no external distractions. Torment is incessant and intense.

"The grave's a fine and private place," But none, I think, do there embrace," urged Andrew Marvell to his coy mistress. But none are coy beyond these closed doors and there is much embracing and wanton tantalism. Biographical outlines of each are extracted by the other two, revealing three extreme limits of nastiness without any complications in the nature of a saving grace. They stink. Had the author found it possible to take three characters nearer the norm and shut them up together forever, it would equally have been hell for them and might have been more interesting for us. *Vicious Circle* is harrowing and oppressive to the verge of boredom.

Since it is in the nature of fine acting to ennoble every character, what is vile we have to take the author's word for and what we see and hear is aesthetically satisfying. Beatrix Lehmann gave a powerful and scarifying performance. Betty Ann Davies exhibited a range and control of facial expression which recorded with instant and delicate accuracy like a magnetic needle. Alec Guinness appeared marvellously unspoiled by his dreadful past and his unflinching politeness and his youthful concern for his posthumous reputation commanded some sympathy. The only member of the staff of the establishment introduced into the play was a suspiciously bland button-boy nicely acted by Donald Pleasance with a suggestion of a sense of humour held in check by etiquette strictly enforced. *Vicious Circle* was produced in a double bill with Bernard Shaw's *Don Juan in Hell*, a lively partner for Sartre's grim peep into the underworld. H. G. M.

"Pick-Up Girl"

PLACING a drama of situation in a court reaps an advantage while incurring a risk. Any trial has its inherent drama. The danger is that the story is told so much by question and answer that the form becomes repetitive to the point of strain.

(Continued on page 32)

Ballet of Three Nations

by AUDREY WILLIAMSON

WITH three ballet companies—the Ballet Theatre of New York at Covent Garden, Serge Lifar's New Monte Carlo Ballet at the Cambridge Theatre and the Ballet Rambert at Sadler's Wells—performing in London simultaneously during July, the first two with a full repertoire of ballets new to this country, the task of the ballet critic in sorting impressions and crystallising them into a limited amount of space becomes a difficult one.

The English company has much the longer history—the Ballet Rambert is this year celebrating its twentieth anniversary—and with years of creative activity to draw up its choreographic standard, taken all round, is higher and more consistent than that of either the American or French companies. On the other hand its dancers are not so strong technically and I found both its new productions, *Mr. Punch* and *Giselle*, disappointing.

In the first Walter Gore the choreographer and Ronald Wilson the designer have captured the tuppence-coloured *grotesquerie* of the *Punch* and *Judy* show, but the ballet is too long, uninventive and unfunny and the musical score seemed to me a hindrance rather than a help. Music was also the log on which *Giselle* foundered. I have not yet heard a successful reorchestration of the first act but tuneful score, and the general pace at which the first act music was taken robbed the dance of all its gaiety and made for the most ponderous performance of the classic in living memory. Sally Gilmour brought all her charm to the leading rôle, but although a perfect artist in modern ballets she lacks the *adagio* qualities and technical brilliance for the great classical parts, and the music defeated her. The first act *pas de deux* and variations—classical display out of keeping with the spirit of the ballet and obviously clapped on to it at a later date—were reintroduced and performed with bright youthful promise by Annette Chappell and John Gilpin, and the second act both *décor* and corps-de-ballet dancing, led by Joyce Graeme's lovely Queen, perceptibly improved. But the mime throughout was poor and this company lacks the resources, orchestral and acting, for such work.

Seeing Antony Tudor's *Gala Performance* staged both by the Ballet Rambert and the Ballet Theatre of New York gave one, however, an insight into the fundamentally better taste of the smaller company. Where the original English version still retains elements of style in its parody, and was performed with wit by the Ballet Rambert dancers (Sally Gilmour's French ballerina in particular brilliantly mimed and

danced), in America the ballet has degenerated to a burlesque which has lost all contact with the styles of dance satirised.

Tudor's revised version verges on the "musical comedy" type of ballet which forms the weakest element in American choreography, and which is seen at its worst in Agnes de Mille's *Three Virgins* and *a Devil*, a lapse in taste so catastrophic that one could hardly believe it had happened. That even the Russian choreographers have not been proof against this influence is also shown in Fokine's *Bluebeard* and Lichine's *Helen of Troy*, which have the meretricious glitter of Hollywood technicolour.

Nevertheless in the six years of its existence Ballet Theatre has produced some work of genuine choreographic value, and although its repertoire is cosmopolitan a lively and quite valid native style is emerging. Both in *Fancy Free* and *Interplay*—the first an American sailor comedy played out on a New York sidewalk, the second an abstract interplay of classical steps and modern rhythms—Jerome Robbins shows a considerable talent, both ballets being noted for their split-second timing, their humorous charm, their musical instinct and dance invention. Jazz and negro influences give a New World flavour to certain movements but the root of Robbins' inspiration is classical and he makes considerable technical demands on his dancers. In the first Michael Kidd, John Kriza and Robbins himself give *bravura* performances and in the second all four couples, led again by Robbins and by John Kriza and Melissa Hayden in an exquisite and original *pas de deux*, danced magnificently as a team.

Performed in practice costumes with black tights and a tunic and background colour scheme of orange, green, blue and cerise, *Interplay* has an adolescent yet never banal charm: in variety of movement and pattern it has something of the quality of an American *Symphonic Variations*, and when his themes show a more adult mental development and he works (as one hopes in the future he may) to music of finer quality, Robbins gives every indication of taking the place in American ballet that Frederick Ashton takes in the English.

At the moment the creative work on an intellectual or dramatic plane falls to the English choreographer Antony Tudor. Tudor has nothing like Ashton's invention in dance steps and combinations, although he is influenced by him in style; nor has he Helpmann's architectural power in the building of a group, his varied grasp of character and sense of dramatic climax. For

(Continued overleaf)



JEROME
ROBBINS

dancer and choreographer with the Ballet Theatre of New York, as he appears in *Fancy Free*. Studies of other of this company's leading dancers appear on page 19.

this reason, in spite of his classical idiom and dramatic themes, he seems to fall as an artist between two stools, just missing the heights attained by the two other choreographers.

This may explain why his *Pillar of Fire* seems at moments thin in design, the edge of the theme blunted by choreographic reiterations, the characters revolving around the strongly-drawn central figure, the sex-starved Hagar, shadowy and colourless as moths in a summer twilight. Yet this mistiness of outline helps, perhaps, to create

Tudor's principal quality, his atmosphere and lyricism, the sense of moving in a dream which some of his best ballets, from *The Planets* to *Pillar of Fire*, convey. His choice of music, with few exceptions, is unerringly sensitive and *Pillar of Fire* seems borne along on the wings of Schoenberg's "Verkinerte Nacht," an inextricable part of the musical design. The poignancy of the theme is concentrated in this wave of sound, in Hagar's occasional gestures of heartsickness and pain, the dim lifted figure of the Lovers in Innocence. The sentimental apotheosis and vagueness of character (the changes of heart of the lover, played by Tudor himself, are never explained, weaken the fabric, and the sex theme lacks the genuineness of a Zola; but it is possible to see why the Americans were excited by this ballet, a new departure for them, and Nora Kaye's Hagar has a bitter shame that firmly grasps the central idea, even though she tends to lack variety of expression. And the younger sister Norma Vaslavina, charming and Jo Mielziner's settings have poetic suggestion.

This company is strong in dancers and the classical extracts are well performed by Nora Kaye, a cold, clean-lined classicist; the more lyrical Alicia Alonso, Andre Eglevsky (a strong technician over-addicted as of yore, to a particular form of pirouette

(Continued on page 36)

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"Swing Bridge"

"The traffic jam upon the bridge at Avignon
Is really quite a wow."

Edna Wood with Richard Curnock and George Carden in a charming number early in Part I.

"Sweetest and Lowest"

AT THE AMBASSADORS

AFTER *Sweet and Low* and *Sweeter and Lower* it scarcely seemed possible that Mr. J. W. Pemberton at the Ambassadors could present a more brilliantly witty show. But all are agreed that *Sweetest and Lowest* is the real triumph of a sensational hat-trick.

No doubt this unprecedented success is in no small measure due to the fact that Alan Melville has written the entire show with the exception of one or two items. In the previous revues Mr. Melville demonstrated his gift for the topical thrust and witty shaft and it is not surprising that in his hands *Sweetest and Lowest* is the most

scintillating intimate revue London has seen.

Hermione Gingold achieves her greatest success to date in an astonishing variety of characters; she remains unique among our revue artistes. With Henry Kendall also at his best and the clever supporting company there is not a dull moment from beginning to end. In this connection too one should mention the music by Charles Zwar, the unusually gay and attractive scenery and costumes designed by Berkeley Sutcliffe, and the masterly direction by Charles Hickman. Our grateful thanks are indeed due to Mr. Pemberton for giving us this riotous third edition, which looks like proving the revue record of all time.

PICTURES BY ALEXANDER BENDER



**"Swing
Bridge"**

"So Avignon soon was unique in France
As the town with the bridge where the people dance."

Edna Wood, Richard Curnock and George Carden in another scene from this charming song and dance number, which also gives an idea of Berkeley Sutcliffe's delightful decor.



**"Film
Foursome"**

"We could write off
that loan with the
money we earn,
In spite of the com-
ments of C. A.
Lejeune."

L. to R.: Chris-
topher Hewett as
Stewart Granger,
Olive Wright as
Phyllis Calvert,
Hermione Gingold
as Margaret Lock-
wood and Richard
Curnock as James
Mason in an amus-
ing skit on British
films.



"Self-Portrait"

It wasn't very dignified, .
 But I'm told the whole thing signified
 'The Rape of Lucrece from the modern angle!'
 Hermione Gingold nearly stops the show
 with her incredible appearance and lugubri-
 as rendering of an elderly Picasso model.



"Days of Dalys"

"I find the modern chorus
 Not a patch on Floradora's."
 Henry Kendall in a tuneful number
 glorifying the charms of the theatre
 in the Edwardian days.

...ti:
 miss the bustle's
 rustle
 and the creaking of
 the stays."
 Henry Kendall in
 other moment
 om "Days at
 y's" is seen with
 the lovely Gibson
 s, symbol of the
 e spacious and
 eful days of old
 Daly's.





"Fit for Eros"

"Let's keep Eros near us just to cheer up
In the centre of the
Centre of the
World"

George Carden, Edna Wood and company in another gay and colourful number.



"1851"

"This is the Age of
Progress,
And Progress is such
fun.
It's good to be growing
up like me
In Eighteen Fifty
One."

Edna Wood and Gretchen Franklin singing "1851," charming period item with lyric by the late Herbert Farjeon.



"A Marriage has been well arranged"

"If the whisky runs dry we've a source of supply—
A man in the know out at Notting Hill Gate."

A cynically up-to-date note is struck by Edna Wood who sings "White Wedding on the Black Market" with Barbara Barrie, Monica Mallory, Julia Stafford and Paul Trevers.

"Sea Shanty"

"Mine was incredibly handsome,
Mine was superbly athletic,
Mine was attracted when I said I acted—
Mine wasn't even magnetic!"

Hermione Gingold (right) with Monica Mallory, Olive Wright and Pam Trevers.

Below:

"Noel, Noel"

"When Europe was attacked and overpowered,
Mr. Coward
Though ostensibly performing just for ENSA,
Was asked by Mr. Churchill to commence a Diplomatic tour to save the British Raj."

Miss Gingold in one of her wittiest numbers, which needs no comment.



Edna Wood and George Carden, who dance and sing attractively in a variety of delightful numbers.



"Long Lie"

"I say, old girl, frightfully sorry."

Henry Kendall as the hearty early riser and Olive Wright as his long-suffering wife in a hilarious domestic sketch.

Below: "Last to Get Out"

"I expect we'll be hearing soon about getting home. Perhaps they're doing it alphabetically. Just my luck, my name's Williams."

Gretchen Franklin reads a letter from her sweetheart, an unassuming young man, whom she is sure will be the last to be demobbed.

Below: "Etchings"

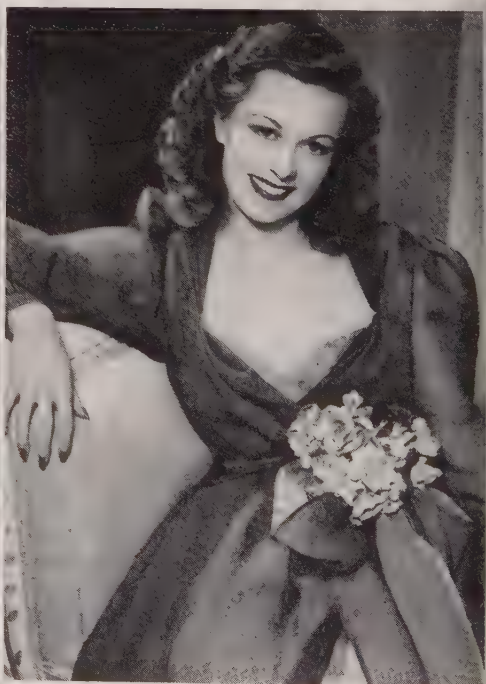
"My naval friend was absolutely charming.

His etchings were attractive, in a way:

In the eighty-nine I saw there were two of Bernard Shaw.

Seven nymphs and fourteen views of Colwyn Bay."

Edna Wood in one of her amusing songs.



PRIVATE



" Initiative "

" You haven't got the push? It's the push all right, Grable."

A topical sketch about Civvy Street in which Henry Kendall gives a most moving portrayal of an ex-R.A.F. hero who is accused of lacking initiative in his post-war job.

" Heredity "

" My father was Young Woodley,
They expelled him rather rudely
From one of our exclusive Public Schools."

Another amusing number in which Miss Gingold proves her astonishing versatility.

" Amo, Amas "

" Amo, amas, I love
my Latin class,
I love my little Latin
teacher."

Edna Wood, George
Garden, Gretchen
Franklin, Richard
Curnock and the
girls in an attrac-
tive school-girl
number.





"Pantomime— Return Visit"

"Why does a cow go Moo-
Moo-Moo
And a pussy cat Miaow-
Miaow-Miaow?"

Kerry Kendall as the Duchess and George Carden as the bewildered U.S. sailor at the pantomime in a revised version of a very funny sketch, which was one of the hits of the previous edition.

Left: "What Next"

Hermione Gingold and Henry Kendall as they appear in the finale. The two stars of *Sweetest and Lowest* are irresistible in their appearances together, particularly in "Absolute Hell," the wickedly pointed successor to "Poison Ivy" (see picture on *Front cover*) and in "Services Rendered Anew," another old favourite.

Ballet Theatre

Some of the principal dancers in the company which Ballet Theatre have brought over from New York for their distinguished season at the Opera House, Covent Garden. Their varied repertoire includes some outstanding ballets by their own choreographers, Anthony Tudor and Jerome Robbins, and the company as a whole have earned great credit for their technical skill and freshness of approach.

Light: Alicia Alonso in
Sylphides and Nora
Maye in Pillar of Fire.



Andre Eglevsky
in
Helen of Troy



Lucia Chase
in
Bluebeard



Hugh Laing
in
Undertow



Irina Baronova

- A recent study of the beautiful ballerina who is coming to London from America this month to play the leading part with Leonid Massine in the dramatization of *4 Ballet in the Ballet*, satirical novel by Caryl Chesson and S. J. Simon. The piece, which will contain some new ballets by Massine and scenes from *Petrushka*, opens in the provinces on September 30th, prior to a London season.



Tony: Gosh, Aunt Nell, does that mean she'll be sitting here with us, eating off this very table?

L. to R. Barbara Everest as Mrs. Dawson, Barbara Couper as Eleanor, Ray Jackson as Tony and Ursula Howells as Judy.

The opening scene of the play. Mrs. Mary Dawson is awaiting the arrival of her son, Robert, who is bringing back the German girl he married after she had helped him to escape from a prisoner-of-war camp.

WESTMINSTER THEATRE

"Frieda"

HERE is a thought-provoking play which reveals Ronald Millar as one of our best promising new playwrights. The problem he poses is that of a German girl, Frieda (most sensitively portrayed by Valerie White), who is brought to her husband's English home towards the end of the war. In spite of the difficulties of the situation Frieda, in the course of a few months wins the allegiance of her husband's family with the exception of his father, Eleanor Dawson, an M.P. who is determined to be diverted from her hatred of the German nation, and but for the arrival of Frieda's brother, an unrepentant Nazi, the play must have ended happily. As it is, the audience is made aware of the deep poignancy of the situation that might very easily arise from our own experience, and the author very cleverly leaves us to form our own opinion of the outcome.

The small company at the Westminster Theatre bring a real sincerity to their parts. Not once do we doubt that Valerie White as Frieda can enter whole-heartedly into the mixed emotions created by her arrival in England. The direction by Irene Hentton is excellent and Michael Relph is responsible for the charming decor.



Robert: It's all right, Mother, she won't bite!

Robert arrives with his wife earlier than expected. (Valerie White as Frieda and Jack Allen as Robert Dawson.)

PICTURES BY ALEXANDER BENDER



Mrs. Dawson: What a beautiful crucifix—thank you.

Robert's mother, though embarrassed by Frieda's stumbling English, is nevertheless very kindly and obviously determined to be friendly. Her son has not yet heard that his brother Alan, has been killed in the war.



Robert: Frieda, Tom Merrick is an old friend of mine. You will therefore shake him politely by the hand. Frieda's first real setback comes when Tom Merrick, ex-prisoner-of-war, refuses to shake hands with her. (Richard Warner as Tom Merrick)



Frieda: Frieda, why do people have to hate each other?
Frieda: Often my father would ask that.

Three days later Robert's young brother, Alan, has a fight with a school friend about Frieda. At first he hated the idea of her coming, but now he begins to like her in spite of himself and finds himself taking her part.



Judy: I see Alan in everything Robert does. Robert is Alan to me.

Judy confides in Eleanor about her feeling towards her brother-in-law, but Eleanor persuades her not to go away. In the end it is agreed that Judy shall act as secretary to Eleanor in her parliamentary career when Eleanor finally decides that the advent of Frieda will not deter her from standing for Parliament.



Frieda: I am not a Nazi,
 I am a nurse.

Eleanor: You are a German.

While the rest of the family begin to fall under the spell of Frieda's quiet charm, Eleanor alone remains adamant in her anti-German fanaticism.



Tony: Now don't put anyone, till I say.

The happy Christmas scene some months later. The war is over and Frieda has become quite one of the family. Her marriage to Robert is to be confirmed by a ceremony in the local Roman Catholic Church on New Year's Day; Frieda is now convinced that Robert really loves her.

Frieda: Ricky, from where have you come?

The sudden arrival of Richard Mansfeld, Frieda's brother, is the turning point of her happiness. Richard is in the Polish army, having volunteered to join them when a prisoner-of-war in Allied hands.



Tony: Who is he, Frieda?
Frieda: He is my brother Tony.

Tony bursts on the scene just when Richard has given Frieda a swastika, emblem of his determination to continue the fight for anti-Naziism. Learning of his sister's new-found love for England and the "English way of life," he brands her a traitor to her country.

the family gather on New Year's Eve with their guest, The Rev. and Francis Munro, the padre who married Robert and Frieda before their escape from the Continent. There are some friendly arguments about the problem of ruling the defeated German nation, and Eleanor is not to be diverted in her hatred of Germany, even by the usually commonsense attitude of the padre. (Gregar Norfolk as the Rev. Munro.)



Robert: What do you want?

Merrick: I want him.

The dramatic moment when Richard, who has been staying with the Dawsons during the past week, rushes in through the french windows, pursued by an angry mob. He has been recognised by Merrick as the Nazi guard who gashed his face in the prison camp. The revelation is a terrible blow for Robert, who cannot now believe that Frieda is entirely untainted.

er: She went out, towards the river. ew...and let her go.

tense scene to the end of the

It is the next morning, and Frieda, overwhelmed by the wedge that Robert has shaken in his life for her, for a moment contemplates escape. But she is not a character that way out, and refusing to go back to her country, thus ending her hopes of happiness, makes a decision for the future of her brother.



Whispers from the Wings

BY
LOOKER C

A GREAT actress looks for a great play. Thus history will repeat itself to the end of time. Away back in the early Nineties Mrs. Patrick Campbell was wasting her magnificent talents at the old Adelphi in such inferior vehicles as *The White Rose*, *The Lights of Home* and *The Black Domino*. She was in search of a dramatist to set the seal on her reputation as a tragedienne. She asked for straw to make bricks. Her prayer was answered in the shape of an obscure young writer who gave her the double opportunity to immortalise both Paula Tanqueray and Arthur Wing Pinero on the same St. James's first night.

Half a century later, Sonia Dresdel, having already won much-coveted spurs with her memorable Hedda Gabler, is discovered seeking to establish the reputation of a worthwhile playwright. She is the answer to the dramatist's prayer. The critics worship at her feet. The public pack a West-End theatre for a year even to see her play the frustrated heroine of a third-rate melodrama. Any dramatist capable of writing a Dresdel vehicle of quality will wake up next day to fame and fortune.

"Where are our dramatists?" sighed Dresdel at supper the other night. "They still appear to be stunned by the war. Actors joined up, and after distinguished careers in the Services, returned to triumph in the theatre. Look at Robert Flemyng in *The Guinea-Pig*, Robert Eddison in *The Kingmaker* and Hugh Williams in *Portrait in Black*. They are doing finer work now than at any time in the old days.

"It is not the same with playwrights. With the exception of *The Wind of Heaven* and *The Winslow Boy*, no outstanding play has been written since 1939. Writers are taking longer to recover from their wartime upheaval.

"Both Alec Clunes and Esmond Knight have shared my experience in discovering that only about one submitted play in every thousand is worthy of serious consideration by managements. Our writers must have passed through great experiences in the war years, but they seem unable to translate them into terms of theatre. Where are the writers of tremendous imagination who create another world, and who have lived through each and all of their characters? It is not enough to be facetious and to think that a play can be turned out during a wet week-end. It must create a world of high imaginings. It entails sleepless nights of anguish until the writer is convinced he has produced the best possible.

"It is the same with actors. In this world of lucrative film contracts, success



SONIA DRESEL

20th Century

and money can come too easily. It is possible for youngsters to earn big money before they have learned their job. Undreamt-of wealth turns their head, a treating their career as a livelihood rather than a calling, they are content to go on making money and more money with only a half-perfected art to their credit.

"Would the Bancrofts and the Kendalls still be household words had they been content to give their public only second-best? In their day they had no celluloid images of themselves to spread their fame to the four corners of the earth.

"Youngsters should read the lives of the great Victorian stars as part of their Academy course. They were not old fogies. They were superb artists. They never 'walked through' a performance, whether in New York or in New Brighton. The same good money was paid into each box office and in return demanded the same quality of playing. Furthermore, they were always conscious that at every performance someone was seeing them, or even seeing play, for the first time, and it was imperative to send them home with exciting memories. Maybe those giants had immortal longings, but in any case their job was their calling and they considered it worth dying for!"

Stratford-upon-Avon 1946 Festival

by HAROLD MATTHEWS

ONCE more a new director takes control at Stratford. Sir Barry Jackson, gratefully esteemed as founder and patron of the Birmingham Repertory Theatre and the Malvern Shaw Festivals, one of the Governors of the Memorial Theatre, now directs the Festival Company. For the ordinary theatre-lover the new arrangement brings added interest because the new Director does not produce the plays, there being a different producer for each play. To date the programme includes *The Tempest* (Eric Crozier), *Cymbeline* (Nugent Monck), *Love's Labour's Lost* (Peter Brook), *Henry V* (Dorothy Green), *As You Like It* (Herbert M. Prentice), and *Macbeth*, which had its first night on June 21st and was produced by Michael Macowan.

The best things in *The Tempest* were supplied by Robert Harris, his presence, his personality, his sense of poetry, his voice and his diction. In costume and make-up, wearing a long black cassock, narrow white collar and grey locks to his shoulder, he closely resembled the china figure representing John Wesley often seen in antique shops. His magical mantle was also plain and austere and the rightful and wrongful nobles were birds of paradise by contrast. The storm in the first scene was indicated by mime with no scenic aid. Against a black curtain, one sailor oscillated a plank and another a post from which a lantern hung. In these unpropitious circumstances the company did extremely well and brought us as near to sea-sickness as did the more realistic galleons of former productions. David O'Brien, in scanty costume leashed on the acanthus leaf and topped with a Greek helmet, made an oddly striking little figure as Ariel. Somehow, one expected him to get swung aloft on a wire like Peter Pan but this did not happen. The drunks—Robert Vernon, rotund and nautical as Stephano, and Hugh Griffith, like a butler on holiday as Trinculo—were solid and lively and never tedious. Julian Somers was a solemn demon who rather compelled respect as Caliban. The insubstantial pageant was quite substantial and the production generally was sound but rendered rather slow by delay between scenes. The music-haunted island of Prospero was well served by mechanical means. The music for all the plays has been specially recorded by the Decca Record Company and the loud-speaking is the first of its kind to be used. This method is successful in advancing unity of control and rendering the necessary music incidental and nicely adjusted to dramatic requirements but it carries the theatre a stage further from the living musician.

Cymbeline was dressed in Jacobean cos-

tumes designed by J. Gower Parks, so that the Romans enjoyed no sartorial advantage over the Britons. The old king himself was played by James Raglan, whose mien and art maintained a regal dignity despite the superior loquacity of queen and step-son. The latter, Cloten, was no mere dolt. Paul Scofield made him a character study without over-stepping the limits of the part. Myles Eason gave straightness of limb, clear eyes and vibrant voice to Posthumus and skilful production made his shocking wager with Iachimo, a rather heavy villainette by David King-Wood, appear to be a sort of mischance in which he was but lightly to be blamed. Leonard White had an excellent make-up as Caius Lucius, General of the Roman Forces, and comported himself with Roman stoical dignity. The antiphon, "Fear no more the heat of the sun," (epitome of all A. E. Housman's poetry), was beautifully and movingly spoken by John Harrison and Donald Sinden. As for Imogen, what opportunities this part offers to a gifted and disciplined actress and with what abundant grace does Valerie Taylor accept them to render us delight! From the moment of her tenderly passionate farewell to the banished Posthumus to her simple yet sublime gesture of forgiveness to Iachimo, she seemed to control emotion ardently pulsing from the heart to the eyes, the lips, the finger-tips, so that the modulations of her ever-pleasing voice were a sort of second eloquence.

Love's Labour's Lost is not many people's favourite play. Much that Shakespeare was to use again to better advantage later, he put into this, his first play; a mixture of gaiety and pedantry acceptable to the taste of 1591. Many of the allusions are now lost to the moderns and the Elizabethan feast of wit seems dry and Haver-shamish, so that the sauce of spectacle has to be well and freshly concocted to help it down. What is to be done? Every producer has to think of something new. Frank Benson used to turn somersaults. Peter Brook's inspiration seems to have been Watteau's Fetes Galantes and brilliantly has he turned this to account. The pleasure derived from such a production owes much to the work of Reginald Leefe, who designed the scenery and costumes. The performance opens with a spirited Dumb Show setting the key and explaining the situation to the meanest intelligence; a ban on women, enforced by a comic policeman. The dainty charm proper to the Princess of France was supplied by Valerie Taylor. Hugh Griffith was clever enough to infuse the sentences of Holofernes with vitality and wit. Among the many items of visual

(Continued overleaf)

pleasure were some beautiful masks worn by musicians accompanying the Russian maskers.

We should know Henry V better than most sovereigns in Shakespeare's gallery. We watch him through two plays bearing the label of his usurping father and then we rub our eyes at his metamorphosis in the superbly patriotic play that bears his name, but we know him as little as we know his creator. His speeches are so correct, his sentiments so accurately proper to the occasion. To depict him adequately on the stage we need a young actor who can charm our senses with an open countenance, serious demeanour, frank and impetuous utterance, handsome and noble bearing, and a voice vibrant in all its tones, whether rousing his followers to action, making love or soliloquising for our benefit. Paul Scofield fulfils these requirements. He makes a splendid king of story-book and is given a splendid story-book setting in Dorothy Green's production, handsomely dressed from designs by Herbert Norris. The speeches before Harfleur and on the eve of Agincourt were magnificently rendered. The whole action had a speed and urgency that filled nearly three hours with absorbing interest. Memories of the film are evoked occasionally, especially in the French Court, which has a similar setting, but comparisons would be fruitless. My own preference would be for the present production, so rich in three-dimensional pageantry. The famous speeches of the Chorus were finely spoken by Robert Harris. Ruth Lodge, as Katherine, supplied the delicate picture-book charm so refreshing after many battle scenes. Hugh Griffith was greenly sinister as the King of France; one felt he would be tricky when it came to treaty-making. A great favourite with the audience was the martial bantam Fluellen of Dudley Jones. Pistol, wearing his rags with arrogance, was well sustained by Vernon Fortescue. David O'Brien was almost the real thing as the Boy but that the period called upon his acting imagination, which was easily equal to the task.

Late medieval costumes designed by Osborne Robinson made lively and brilliant the production of *As You Like It*, to the success of which many small parts contributed not a little. The strength of the small parts is noticeable in this company. If they have anything to add to the plot, they get it over. The music, composed and arranged by Julius Harrison, was also an important feature. Ruth Lodge was a witty and charming Rosalind, well partnered with Myles Eason's Orlando. Hugh Griffith worked well the seams of Touchstone's humour and Donald Sinden was a popular William. Julian Somers' Jacques was reasonably sombre, free from gall. In the last scene Hymen was revealed as Amiens,

a pleasing bit of production, and the role was filled by Dudley Jones, in excellent voice for the songs that fell to it.

Macbeth had an enthusiastic reception at its first performance. It was played in a permanent set, consisting of two flights of rather steep and rather narrow steps, one at each side of the stage, leading to a bridge. Beneath this bridge was the equivalent of the Elizabethan inner stage and much of the action took place here. Unfortunately the enfolding stairways not only cramped this action but hid it from certain parts of the house. The steps themselves needed caution, since there appeared to be scarcely two feet of stage between the bottom step and a twelve-foot drop into the empty orchestra pit. All this added to the excitement. The play was dressed in the period of its authorship or a little later, and this, and our own sad times, made the events and their causes and effects seem very near and easily credible. *Macbeth's* prompting by the witches was an acceptable convention; every story must have an arbitrary beginning. After that, it all seemed only too true. Robert Harris gave a consistent and sensitive performance as *Macbeth*, delivering the speeches with clarity and imaginative feeling, so as to heighten the music of the verse and intensify its tragic import. One sympathised with this murderer on his unstable throne, plainly at his wits' end. His wife seemed fearfully worried about him, for they were a devoted couple. Valerie Taylor, as Lady *Macbeth*, made her first entry upon the bridge, speaking before she came into view—a Dresden china figure in a murderous red wig, too coarse in texture. Accepting this head-gear as a sort of conventional badge belonging to the part, we were quickly hurried along by the drive of her will, all scruples lulled by the music of her voice. Many moments, admirably enacted, suggested brilliant production. One may instance the silence that fell after the murder of Duncan on Malcolm's query "By whom?"; and the transposition of the scene wherein Lennox makes his ironical speech, "So that, I say, he has borne all things well"; so that it follows *Macbeth's* unfortunate banquet and a spying servitor gives point to the double entendre. *Macbeth's* seeing the dagger in a book by his cosy fireside was an interesting experiment of more doubtful value. The absence of a visual ghost of Banquo made *Macbeth's* seizures before the horrified embarrassment of his guests very realistic and Robert Harris and Valerie Taylor put the scene over magnificently. Julian Somers, as Macduff, received the news of the surprising of his castle in manner to draw tears. Paul Scofield, looking like Bonnie Prince Charlie, made a very gallant Malcolm and James Raglan well deserved the

(Continued on page 34)

ght:
 ETHEL MERMAN—starring as Annie Oakley in
Annie Get Your Gun, New York's latest smash
 musical success.

WITH the successful launching of *Annie Get Your Gun*, Ethel Merman has definitely been acclaimed the American mistress of musical comedy and number one smash of the New York critics.

Miss Merman, as everybody knows over here, is the Brooklyn miss who twenty years ago, fed up with feeding a typewriter short-hand notes, decided she could get much more out of life making musical notes by singing in a night club. Fully conscious she did not possess the chest manipulation to climb to a high C, she dropped her pencil and without a singing lesson in her kit, set out to make everybody Merman-minded. It was her full-throated, metallic roaring of "I Got Rhythm" in the late George Gershwin's *Girl Crazy* that woke up the town to her potentialities and after her sensational production of "You're the Top" in Cole Porter's *Anything Goes*, Mr. Porter came right out and said the Merman attack and delivery of his lyrics were at least half the success of getting his songs across. So the Merman-Porter collaboration continued to highlight the Broadway musical field through *Red, Hot and Blue*, *Dubarry Was a Lady*, *Panama Hattie* and *Something for the Boys*. During the past few years Miss



Vandamm Studio

Echoes from Broadway

BY OUR AMERICAN CORRESPONDENT E. MAWBY GREEN

erman has paused long enough in her career to get a couple of husbands and a couple of babies, but is now anchored to Broadway with *Annie Get Your Gun* for as long as she has the ambition and energy to keep firing the bullets that puts *Annie* across.

In her latest triumph Miss Merman is not changing her way with a Cole Porter score but is making new fame for Irving Berlin with his first word and music contributions in *This Is The Army*. Originally Jerome Kern was set to supply the songs for *Annie Get Your Gun*, but his recent lamented death caused the switch in songmasters. Mr. Kern has given Miss Merman two show-stoppers that fit right into her barrel: "You Ain't What Comes Naturally" and "You Ain't Get a Man With a Gun," and for the commercial hit parade there is "They Say Wonderful" and "Sun in the Morning." The book that Herbert and Dorothy Fields have built around the famous trigger-woman, Annie Oakley, is flexible enough to

permit the manoeuvres of a star of the Merman magnitude to riddle her following with laughter. It shows Annie's rise from her sharp-shooting hill-billy days of natural resources to the gold and glamour of international acclaim and her fall for the rival male star-shooter of her day, Frank Butler (Ray Middleton). In between the shooting there are dances by Helen Tamiris, a display of costumes by Lucinda Ballard and set off by the trick, fancy settings of Jo Mielziner.

There is talk that the lucky producers, Richard Rodgers and Oscar Hammerstein 2nd, are tempting Gracie Fields and Beatrice Lillie with a West End production of *Annie Get Your Gun*, with Mr. Berlin standing by to do over the lyrics to suit whichever of these personalities says "yes" first. Meanwhile this musical is providing Miss Merman with the biggest success of her career.

Orson Welles, the one-man theatre, has taken Jules Verne's novel *Around the World*

(Continued overleaf)



ARTHUR MARGETSON, ORSON WELLES,
MARY HEALY and LARRY LAURENCE
in a scene from the Orson Welles-Cole Porter
musical extravaganza *Around the World*.

in *Eighty Days* and has had himself a time turning it into the maddest musical hodge-podge since Olsen and Johnson unleashed the fury of the corn bomb with *Hellzapoppin'* several years ago. As a matter of fact, during the road tryout Mr. Welles' publicity man suggested the production be called *Wellesapoppin'* instead of the now abbreviated *Around the World*, but the great man demurred.

Nothing has been spared in recounting the dime novel adventures that befall that most English of Englishmen, Mr. Phileas Fogg (Arthur Margetson), as he circles the globe in the year 1872 to win a wager, pursued by the double dealing Dick Fix, a copper's nark (Orson Welles). In India, where Phileas eventually saves Mrs. Aouda, an Indian Princess (Mary Healy) from a funeral pyre, he first appears deep in the great Indian forest atop a full sized papier maché elephant nonchalantly sipping his tea, prepared by his Yankee manservant, Passepartout (Larry Laurence). In America, he remains completely unruffled when he meets Lola (Victoria Cordova) in a low place in Lower California. His equilibrium is unshaken when he is introduced to a medicine man of the Ojibway tribe, who looks very much like a fugitive from a totem pole. He is calm and collected when captured by hostile Indians, left on the peak of Bald Mountain, is carried off by an eagle and ultimately saved while the chorus in their best "Rule Britannia" costumes sing "Wherever They Fly the Flag of Old England," while Mrs. Aouda marches down the aisle of the theatre with the United States Marines to "The Marine Hymn." Propositioning Egyptian dancing girls and an Opium Hell in Hong-Kong get their play in the proceedings, and the first act finale is nothing less than the Oka Saka Circus, Yokohama, Japan, with Dick Fix, disguised as a Japanese magician, getting chickens

out of the vests of the orchestra customers as the tight rope walker does "the slide of life"!

If all this is beginning to sound like musical Mickey Finn—add to it movie made in the old fashioned flicker manne a scene in which the miniature bridge at Perilous Pass, Medicine Bow collapses after a train goes over it, several straight Cole Porter tunes, 55 stagehands and 34 scenes and you'll understand why Orson Welles nursing the biggest theatrical hangover the season. And he is nursing like mad trying to get the show over, for the critic reception was not over-friendly and now the hot weather is against him also. But at the writing he seems to be doing better than anyone had expected and if his movie, radio and other theatrical commitments will permit his sticking on the stage long enough there is a slight chance he might get out of the "hock" he went into to get the show on.

As producer - author - director - star, Mr. Welles is always the showman, but he could have used a firmer hand, a pair of scissors, a blue pencil and a more critical eye. The ingredients for a wonderfully cockeyed extravaganza are there, but the alchemist Mr. Welles, lets things fizzle and splutter too often, probably through lack of time to do justice to his many duties. Only in his capacity as star, a temporary job he took on the road which of necessity became more permanent than he had expected, is he eminently successful. He is properly "hokey," properly funny, properly informal and a particularly fine burlesque comedian in his Dynamite Gus disguise, fat, sloppy, roaring, shooting desert rats. Arthur Margetson as Phileas Fogg is a very superior anchor for the zany goings on and even manages to instill some style and genuine wit into the proceedings.

* * *

The Theatre Guild production of Rodgers and Hammerstein's *Oklahoma!* recently passed its 1,405th performance, thereby making it the longest run musical ever to play on Broadway. 2,107,611 customers have run up a gross of \$5,442,614. And that's not all. The touring company has played 1,263 performances for 1,918,400 persons in 23 cities to the total of \$4,862,130. The staggering total: Attendance, 4,026,060; receipts, \$10,304,754; performances 2,668.

The other major announcement is the capturing by Noel Coward of Mary Martin to star in his newest operetta, *Scarlet Lady*, which is due to relight London's reborn Drury Lane Theatre in November. The lovely Miss Martin is the most bewitching musical comedy star to hit Broadway in this generation, being in the great tradition of Marilyn Miller, Gertrude Lawrence and Evelyn Laye.

Gielgud Home Again - - - by ERIC JOHNS

BIT by bit London's pre-war glory is being restored. The fountains are playing in Trafalgar Square, the statues are back on their plinths, but most significant of all to the playgoer, John Gielgud is back at St. Martin's Lane. Gielgud is playing at the New, after an absence of ten years. His emotional and imaginative conception of Raskolnikoff in *Crime and Punishment* will be chronicled as one of his major achievements. It is a masterpiece of character-study in the neurotic-hysterical vein. Never has he soared to greater heights, even at that same stage where he originally established himself as our leading romantic actor.

A year before Gielgud was born Sir Charles Wyndham opened the New with a revival of *Rosemary*, and prior to 1914 the theatre had a distinguished career, with Fred Terry and Julia Neilson using it for their regular London season of costume plays. It was on the stage of the New, just after the first World War that Katharine Cornell made her one and only appearance at London, as Jo in *Little Women*. There was a theatre shortage even in those days. Marian Braithwaite was playing *Jack 'o' Diamonds* by night, so the *Little Women* company had to play by day, but Miss Braithwaite put her dressing room at the disposal of the young American actress, whose spectacular career still lay ahead.

Gielgud's first recollection of the New was going there as a school-boy to see Marian Braithwaite and Leon M. Lion in *The Chinese Puzzle*. Two years later he was thrilled by the first night of *The Wandering Jew*, probably Matheson Lang's most effective part. In 1924 he witnessed another historic first night, when Sybil Thorndike reached a new peak in her career with *Joan*. Two years later Gielgud was at the New, but on the other side of the stage, playing his first big part in the West-End. After understudying Noel Howard as Lewis Dodd in *The Constant Lovers*, he succeeded him in the part, which he played for eighteen months, thereby making the London playgoing public very Gielgud-conscious.

After those historic 1929 and 1930 seasons at the Old Vic, when the Waterloo Road patrons realised that a young Hamlet had one who could hold his own with memories of Forbes-Robertson, Irving and Barrymore, Gielgud returned to the New with his superb production of *Richard of Bordeaux*, which he ran for well over four hundred nights, with Ben Frangon-Davies, Donald Wolfitt, Margaret Webster, Ben Webster and Francis Taylor in the cast. The New became Gielgud's home and he remained there until he set out to conquer America with his Hamlet in 1936.

Those glittering productions of the Thirties at the New, with their all-star casts, are now a matter of theatrical history. They were exciting times for the playgoer. In 1934 *Hamlet* attained its second longest run on record with an unforgettable cast to support Gielgud—Laura Cowie, Frank Vosper, Jessica Tandy, George Howe, Alec Guinness, Jack Hawkins, Glen Byam Shaw, William Devlin and Richard Ainley. After a production of *Noah* with Marjorie Fielding, Ena Burrill and Marius Goring, Gielgud staged *Romeo and Juliet*, alternating the parts of Romeo and Mercutio with Laurence Olivier. Peggy Ashcroft was Juliet and Edith Evans the finest Nurse in living memory. To round off this brilliant season, Komisarjevsky produced *The Seagull*, with Edith Evans, Martita Hunt, Gielgud, Stephen Haggard and Leon Quatermaine.

Returning to London, following his triumph in America, Gielgud assumed management of the Queen's for a year's repertory season, presenting four classical plays with a permanent company. Afterwards he was there for a year with Dodie Smith's *Dear Octopus*, Marie Tempest's last great success. He was then at the Globe for two seasons, acted *Macbeth* at the Piccadilly, played *Love for Love* at the Phoenix, and then moved to the Haymarket, but now he is back again at the New, which had a rather chequered career until success returned with the Old Vic seasons of 1944, '45 and '46. Gielgud occupies the dressing room normally used by Laurence Olivier, but can only remain there until the Old Vic open their autumn season.

Far too much malicious gossip has been circulated about Olivier and Gielgud. Each actor has naturally attracted countless admirers, who, like blindly devoted balletomanes, have come dangerously near stirring up bad blood. One recently heard dark rumours about Olivier having eclipsed Gielgud, merely because the latter decided to play one or two less spectacular parts at the Haymarket. An American newspaper went so far as to enquire whether *Lady Windermere's Fan* would be produced by Gielgud in New York this season as his answer in rivalry to the Old Vic. *Crime and Punishment* is a significant reply to anyone daring to suggest the Gielgud star is on the wane. His performance is exciting theatre, providing a lasting memory. Olivier has never done anything finer.

Rivalry is good in the theatre. The prima donna and the prima ballerina are both on their mettle because their rivals perform the same roles at the same time, and though comparisons may be odious, they are inevitable, and set a standard in the public mind. Duse and Bernhardt often

(Continued overleaf)

played the same parts in the same city at the same time. During a week in June 1895 they both played Magda in London. They were naturally compared, and Shaw went to great pains to point out that "Duse is not in action five minutes before she is a quarter of a century ahead of the handsomest woman in the world."

The same rivalry exists between Gielgud and Olivier today, but it is not bitter rivalry. They are old friends and good friends and their two similar seasons at the New and the Haymarket were not staged as a race to prove the better man. It so happens that Gielgud's decision to play a classic part has often been the signal for another established actor to play it simultaneously. When he first played Hamlet in the West-End, Moissi and Ainley elected to play it as well, so that London had a choice of three Hamlets. In New York Leslie Howard staged *Hamlet* at the Imperial, while Gielgud played it at the St. James. Pressmen accused the two stars of going to each other's shows in dark glasses, and a good deal of unnecessary pernicious gossip was spread abroad merely because two leading actors decided to play the same classic part. When Markova and Fonteyn decide to dance Giselle or Schnabel and Lamond to play the Emperor Concerto during the same week it hardly seems to evoke such furious antagonism.

Olivier is to play King Lear in the autumn, which will give the harpies another chance to tear either his or Gielgud's reputation to shreds. Gielgud played the part in 1930 and again in 1940 at the Old Vic. Donald Wolfitt also played it recently in London. It is a pity playgoers cannot view these performances as they look at paintings, without considering the private life of the artist. Acting is partly a gift and partly an acquired skill; the public get no better value for their money by hunting the artist after curtain-fall. They can follow him home and peep through his letter-box, but such behaviour in no way enriches or enhances their appreciation of his art.

Gielgud and *Crime and Punishment* will be looking for a new home when the Old Vic moves back to the New in September. Edith Evans will be leaving the cast to join Godfrey Tearle in *Antony and Cleopatra*, so some other actress will be drawing our tears with Katerina Ivanovna Marmeladoff's consumptive cough. Meantime the lively queues clamouring to see *Crime and Punishment* prove that there is a healthy appetite for highly imaginative acting capable of lifting playgoers out of the drab course of their lives. The New seems to specialise in presenting the few actors who can perform such a miracle successfully, and whether it happens to be Olivier or Gielgud the "House Full" boards go out just the same.



John Vickery

RAYMOND HUNTLEY, who has the longest and most important role of his career in *Fear No More*, adapted by Diana Hamilton from the short story "Mr. Arcularis," by Conrad Aiken, which opens at the Lyric, Hammersmith, on August 5th. Another leading role is taken by Joan Haythorne, who created such a favourable impression in *Young Mr. Barrington*.

Newest Plays (Contd. from page 8)

Elsa Shelley's drama of juvenile delinquency gathers the advantage at the price of tedious dialogue. Never, surely, were so many questions asked and answered. Never, it may well be, did an audience respond so deeply to the issue at trial.

The criminal before us is Elizabeth Collins, fifteen-year-old victim of the combination of urban circumstances which can turn young girls on the streets to fall easy prey to immorality and disease. A long hearing in the Juvenile Court determines her future—hospital and institution; will endeavour to save one young citizen where parents have failed. This decision is not reached before the dramatist has had ample time to depict the pathetic home background, occasionally to load the dice sometimes to preach, but on balance to present in human terms that variety of social document which Ibsen and Brieux did not disdain.

This Lindsey production has the merit of being well mounted and competently played. Parental futility that incurs such heavy penalties for the children is admirably drawn by Joan Miller and Hugh Pryse. Ernest Jay is human and sympathetic as Judge Bentley.

Pick-Up Girl transferred to the Prince of Wales Theatre on July 23rd for a limited season with Patricia Plunkett as 'Elizabeth Collins.'

The Byam Shaws

by

AUDREY WILLIAMSON

GRADUALLY actors and producers who disappeared from the theatre scene at the outbreak of war are returning again to the stage. One of the names that has recently appeared on a West End programme is that of Glen Byam Shaw, producer of *The Winslow Boy*, in which his wife, Angela Baddeley, has a leading part. Before the war Glen Byam Shaw and Angela Baddeley acted in a number of plays together, notably in *The Three Sisters* and *The Merchant of Venice* during the memorable John Gielgud repertory season at the Queen's in 1937. In the second play their playing together as Gratiano and Nerissa had particular wit and charm, and few who saw the brilliant atmospheric production of *The Three Sisters* by Michel St. Denis will forget, among that superb team, the extraordinarily sinister and livid power—suppressed yet strangely fanatic—of Byam Shaw's Solyony, and the drab realism of Angela Baddeley's frowsy, scolding, comely Natasha.

Both are character actors in the sense that they can hide their charm and penetrate to the bone of an unpleasant character when required. Shaw's Darnley in *Queen of Scots*, a weak, vacillating, wax flower of a man with a streak of congealed venom, was one of his most vivid performances. His versatility is usually found only in the genuine stage troupier who has gone through the long and hard experience of repertory. Shaw gained this experience with J. B. Cogan at Oxford, and Angela Baddeley was, like her sister Hermione, on the stage from childhood, acting child parts at the Old Vic and touring with the Arts League of Service Travelling Theatre before graduating into *The Beggar's Opera* and other Nigel Playfair productions at Hammersmith.

Angela Baddeley's most instinctive qualities, though, are those of charm and warmth of character. She would have made an enchanting Juliet, a part she would I think have much liked to play, and it is a pity she is seen so infrequently in the classics for she has a sense of "style" rare in modern actresses.

Perhaps the finest parts she and her husband ever played together were those of Anne of Bohemia and Richard II in the tour of *Richard of Bordeaux*, when she played the young foreign Queen with a swiftness of wit, wisdom and tenderness of heart. The stage glowed when she appeared. Shaw, faced with the difficult task of succeeding John Gielgud in one of his greatest parts, lacked his predecessor's ability, that golden flame of spirit with



Angus McBean

GLEN BYAM SHAW and ANGELA BADDELEY

which Gielgud held his nerves in check and braved his enemies with a final tattered instinct of majesty. But if Shaw's collapse at the end was too complete, his nerve storms and growing bitterness were finely done, and his pathos bang true.

My own interest in these two artists dates from this production. Angela Baddeley's earlier triumphs as Hedwig in *The Wild Duck* and Lady Teazle I did not see, but her Anne of Bohemia heralded a range of subtle characterisations, from her repressed secretary-companion in *Night Must Fall* (a study of remarkable psychological insight, expressing the character by implication and never by direct statement) to her present quiet and sympathetic Catherine Winslow, a performance without emotional stress yet never dull.

Until the outbreak of war her husband gave distinction to many parts in Gielgud's productions, and his Oswald in *Ghosts* has not been equalled in recent years. His last part before the war was that of Horatio in Gielgud's Lyceum production. He had long wanted to play this part, and I still remember the moving simplicity with which, at the end, he folded the hands across the breast of the dead Prince.

Shaw volunteered for the Army at the outbreak of war, attained the rank of Major and was wounded in the Burma campaign

(Continued on next page)

of 1943. Now he is back in the theatre again, one of its most vital and sensitive minds even though he says he will not act again. He has, though, done some excellent broadcasting work and made a fine Edmond Dantes in a recent serialisation of *The Count of Monte Cristo*.

His production before the war of the Welsh play *Rhondda Roundabout* showed that ability to suggest atmosphere and weld side plots and character, the whole life of a community, into a moving whole, that one associates in the theatre with a producer such as Michel St. Denis.

"Everything I know about production I learned from Michel St. Denis," Shaw says, and both he and his wife remember *The Three Sisters* as the most inspiring and enjoyable production in which they ever worked. Shaw also counts his years with Gielgud as among the happiest of his life. He has a high and generous admiration for both Gielgud and Laurence Olivier as actors. "Like all truly great artists they have never become complacent, and are never completely satisfied with their work. They have no consciousness of being great." This humility, or fundamental doubt nearly all actors feel, within themselves, about the quality of their work, he thinks one of the most touching but perhaps most necessary things in an actor's life. He had it himself in abundance and tends to deprecate his past work, although few will not feel that in Glen Byam Shaw the stage is losing a fine and valuable character actor.

After he has produced *Antony and Cleopatra* with Edith Evans and Godfrey Tearle in the autumn Shaw is to take up the position of Director of the Old Vic Drama School, in which he will be associated with his former colleagues Michel St. Denis and George Devine. Remembering the remarkably adult and artistically satisfying performances given by the students of St. Denis' own Studio before the war, one may expect some vital and interesting developments of the "New Vic" in the future. Shaw's alert enthusiasm and conscientiousness are of value to any new theatre undertaking, although his withdrawal—one hopes only temporarily—from production will be a loss. "We need good producers so badly at the moment," says his wife, putting the actor's viewpoint. "We can ill afford to

dispense with one."

Her sympathy and commonsense ideally balance his nervous vitality. Theirs is one of the happiest of theatre marriages and each takes an intense critical pride in the other's work. It is difficult to believe, when meeting them, that their youngest child, Juliet (born just before her father's First Night as Darnley) is 12 years old, and they have just presented their son with his first motor-bike. Angela's wide-eyed, candid charm is as youthful as his eagerness.

Off-stage, in a not always unmalicious profession, they are among the few theatre artists of whom one never hears an ill word. They are admired by other actors for their work as well as for their kindness and charm. They are among the theatre's keenest and most talented workers, and one feels that they have much to give the theatre now and in the future.

Stratford-upon-Avon Festival (Con. from p. 28) encomiums passed on good King Duncan by his intending liquidator. Hugh Griffiths and Dudley Jones were delightfully grotesque in voice and appearance as witches. The last scene fell away rather. Macbeth seemed to have no armed followers and he put up no fight with Macduff, who simply drove him into the wings. The tragedy seems to need the fight at the end and if the steps prevented this they were a doubtful asset. They were no help in Lady Macbeth's sleep-walking, which thrilled by Valerie Taylor's imaginatively tense and feverish acting, well supported by Nancy Nevinson as the Gentlewoman and Douglas Seale as the Doctor. All the exits were clapped. There were many children in the audience and from them the loudest applause followed the murder of Macduff's son, nicely played by David O'Brien, and his mother's scream as she is strangled. Such are these times.

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Amateur Stage

THIS month our notes open with a request —will amateur societies please not send tickets for their productions unless such tickets are specially requested by the editorial department. Lack of space and numerically limited staff forbids any detailed notice or criticism of the average production by amateurs, although exceptions can be made with such events as drama festivals or original works. It is an old weakness with amateurs that lack of competent, constructive criticism of their work is a check to progress. Some steps to remedy this were taken before the war by the two organisations serving them, and it is to be hoped they will be revived.

The Students Repertory Club gave two performances of *The Shining Hour* at Guildhall School of Music in July.

Dekker's *The Witch of Edmonton* was the recent choice of Toynbee Drama School, Toynbee Hall. A number of readers in the London area seem undecided as to where to find a centre of dramatic activity with opportunities for co-operation—if they get in touch with Toynbee Hall they will find something interesting on offer.

Dunlop Dramatic Society, Fort Dunlop, Birmingham, has just ended the most successful season in its 14 years' existence. Its membership is now 160 and attendances at public productions grew steadily throughout the season until for *Dear Octopus* many had to be turned away. Its recent festival had scored a new success. For the first time two teams from an associated factory (ventry) took part. It is hoped that other factories will take part next season. Besides a number of productions for members only, the public performances were given of each of the following plays: *The Man Who Came to Dinner*, *The Moon is Down*, and *Dear Octopus*.

Does any amateur actor in London feel like playing Alan Jeffcock in *Hindle Wakes*? So, the Playmakers, of Ealing, are waiting for him. Apply to Miss E. Bishop, 44 Harrington Road, Hanwell, W.7. The monthly newsletter issued by this group is a good method of informing members of current activities.

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Ballet from Three Nations

(Continued from page 1)

and John Kriza. Little of Petipa's poet of movement, however, remains in Antoinette Dolin's acrobatic and disjointed rearrangements, and though *Les Sylphides* was beautifully disciplined only Alonso and Kriza caught the true spirit of the music. *Petrouchka* also suffered in performance and the ballet, I think, is in any case beginning to "date." It is a "period" masterpiece, not now a "living" one; we have perhaps, passed the "puppet" stage of ballet and modern choreographers have moved on and struck deeper into human life and emotion. I have never seen a great *Petrouchka* (Wozniakowsky, my first, was always a greater character dancer than mime) and only Nijinsky, to judge from photographs, had the wisdom not to plaster his face with too much puppet-make-up and block the pathos of expression.

The company has excellent talent but lacks a ballerina of Margot Fonteyn's maturity and range and a male dancer. Robert Helpmann's personality and vivacious intelligence. Alonso has every quality the ballerina except *brío* and nobility which may come, but she is not yet a great actress and her first act as Giselle for this reason a disappointment. It was gently appealing, but never suggested Giselle's joy of dancing, her passionate devotion and suffering or her emotional breakdown. In the second act she danced exquisitely but she is as yet only half a Giselle, and the performance and staging generally on again emphasised the vast superiority of Sadler's Wells productions of the classical. The classical mime in particular has deteriorated in America out of all recognition.

The poverty of Lifar's choreography, the awkwardness of invention and total inability to conceive ballet as a unity of dance, drama, music and *décor*, gave the New Monte Carlo Ballet an artistic inferiority the others not even some brilliant dancing could palliate. Yvette Chauvire, Jean Charrat, Marcelle Cassini (a fine Zobeide and young Polovtsian girl) and Alexandrine Kalioujny, a *Prince Igor* soloist of amazing speed and elevation, deserve a finer setting for their talents. The season was redeemed by Yvette Chauvire's Giselle, considerable both in acting and dancing power. Her Mad Scene is the most moving I have seen after Fonteyn's, and she is a true ballerina with that sculptured poise of head and arm-line rarely seen nowadays. In spite of an inadequate male corps-de-ballet and cramped stage, with none of that hot glare of veils and sky that drenched the ball at Covent Garden in a crimson lava, *Prince Igor* also retained something of its momentum of excitement and of the whirl and leanness of Fokine's most thrilling invention.

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